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AUTHOR Landis-Groom, Eileen
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ABSTRACT

An experimental composition project focused on a correspondence method of teaching writing. Composition and Literature students at the Florida campus of Embry-Riddle University exchanged papers and critiques with students on the Arizona campus of Embry-Riddle. This correspondence method insisted on the nature of writing as a form of dialogue. Students wrote not only for the teacher as audience and potential critic, but also for student partners who helped them organize their thoughts. This exchange consisted of a three-step process: (1) sending a first draft of the paper to the student partner at the other campus or in the other class; (2) writing a critique of the partner's first draft and sending it to the writer; and (3) revising the first draft by using suggestions gleaned from the critique. Writing was done in a business letter format. This experiment was evaluated by a number of different means. Papers written without the benefit of peer review were compared with those that were the result of collaborative editing. Critiques written by students were evaluated. Students responded to a question in the final examination that required them to evaluate how they felt the experiment had improved their writing. Students said they felt more relaxed writing for a peer; their peer's advice helped them see problems more clearly; they learned the purpose of revising; and their peers' physical distance enhanced the objectivity and honesty of critiques. This method emphasizes the collaborative learning that occurs between students, the importance of peer review, and writing as a process in which critique becomes an important composition in itself. (Samples of student critiques and handouts intended to guide students through writing letter/critiques are attached.) (SAM)

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Using Letters Between Classes and Campuses

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to Improve Writing Skills

Dr. Eileen Landis-Groom

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My colleagues and I are professors of English at Embry-Riddle
Aeronautical University, Dr. Geoff Kain on the Daytona Beach,
Florida Campus, and Dr. Patric McElwain and I on the Prescott,
Arizona Campus. During two semesters, Dr. Kain and I conducted
an experimental composition project that focused on a
correspondence method of teaching writing. Dr. Kain's students
in HU 122 (Composition and Literature I) on the Daytona Beach
Campus and my students in HU 122 on the Prescott Campus exchanged
papers and critiques in letter form. During one semester, Dr.
McElwain's students in HU 123 (Composition and Literature II) and
my students in HU 122, both classes on the Prescott Campus, also
exchanged papers and critiques in letter form.

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This correspondence method insists on the nature of writing
as a form of dialogue by having the student write not only for
the teacher as a "general," hypothetical audience and critic but
also for a student partner who helped him/her to organize his/her
thoughts and feelings. This method emphasizes the collaborative
learning that occurs between the students, the importance of peer
review, and writing as a process in which the critique becomes an
important composition in itself. Based on our evaluations of
students' papers and critiques and student self-assessment of the
experiment, my colleagues and I have come to believe that the

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students engaged in the project have learned more about the writing process than they would have in a traditional closed-classroom environment.

The exchange was a three-step process: sending a first draft of the paper to the student partner at the other campus or in the other class; writing a critique of the partner's first draft and sending it to the writer; and finally, revising the first draft by using helpful suggestions gleaned from the critique. Both papers and critiques were done in business letter format. (See attached for instructions for the critiques, a model critique, and representative student comments.) Also, in the exchange between the classes on the same campus, the students used pennames to preserve anonymity. The paper topics for the Daytona/Prescott exchange were informational, either about the students themselves, their locations, or campuses. In the exchange between the two classes on the Prescott Campus, the topics were on subjects both classes were reading about, such as America in decline, genetic engineering, and obedience to authority.

The results of the experiment were ascertained by a number of different means. My colleagues and I evaluated the students' papers, which included a "control" paper, that is, a paper written without the benefit of a critique by their student partner. We also analyzed and evaluated the critiques written by the students. During the first semester, in the exchange between campuses, I also used a control in the form of another HU 122

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class that exchanged papers among themselves. Finally, the students responded to a question on the final examination, an in-class essay that asked them if and how they thought the experiment improved their writing.

Although some problems were encountered (and will be discussed later in the paper), this method of instruction proved beneficial for most of the participants in the experiment. My colleagues and I agreed that the papers and critiques were better written than in previous composition courses and that the critiques were even stronger than the papers. In the responses written on the final, in-class essay, a majority of the students credited this experiment for a noticeable improvement in their performance as writers.

The reasons for improvement given by a majority of the students can be grouped into five areas: one, the students felt more relaxed about writing; two, the advice given by the student partner allowed them to "see" their problems more clearly; three, critiquing others' work reinforced learning and encouraged better critiquing of their own work by helping the students develop a sense of audience and purpose and by enhancing an awareness of the importance of revising; four, the physical and emotional distance of their partners guaranteed the honesty and objectivity of their critiques.

As noted in point one, when writing to a distant peer, the students became more relaxed about writing. When critiquing a

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work, one student pointed out that he "saw that all [students] had the same problems," and in seeing that others had the same problems he did, he became more relaxed. Also, as another student remarked, he/she was more likely to catch his/her own mistakes. Some students commented on the value of writing to an audience they considered to be on their level. "It (the critique) was more like having a friend tell me what was wrong with my paper," one student wrote. When they received praise from their critics, their confidence increased and thus their ability to relax and write more effectively. They realized that they "knew more about writing than [they] thought [they] did." One student wrote, "In the third and last critique, I realized I was no longer a bad English student." The students also commented that they felt less "stressed" about writing because they knew that at least some of their problems would be pointed out by their partners and could be revised before handing the paper in for a grade. One student commented that he "welcomed the change from writing to a fictitious audience or an English instructor who stood poised to rip my paper apart."

One student began each critique with a "welcome to another edition of 'Rate-the-paper,' sometimes then remarking that "we are still shooting for that ultimate goal: an 'A' in English." That student would conclude his critique with a rating on a scale of one to ten. This tactful encouragement, often made in a spirit of fun, added to a less threatening, more relaxed

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atmosphere, one that many students remarked about in their final essay.

As was mentioned in point two, the advice the critics gave allowed students to see their problems more clearly. The problems that were noted by their partners and responded to when revising ranged from mechanical problems, such as spelling and punctuation, to problems in composing a clear thesis and follow through from the thesis, to developing support, coherency, and clarity. Although the students appreciated editing in mechanics, many of them, especially those students during the first semester, wanted more than mere proofreading and welcomed suggestions for improvement in organization or support.

Many students stated that they learned how to improve organization and develop support by responding to the criticisms of their student partners. One individual wrote:

My Daytona 'corrections advisor,' tried to be gentle in explaining he was confused about my stance and the order I would be taking to explain my topic. I had told (him) the same item in his paper was very good and so I looked at his paper and determined he had a kind of outline. I used this on my final draft and felt that it came out much better.

Concerning giving adequate support, in one student's final essay was the comment:

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Not fully developing a paragraph has always been a bad habit of mine, one that I have not noticed till writing to Daytona. Using Daytona's advice, I have stopped and examined all my paragraphs and have asked myself, "What examples or points can I add to develop this more thoroughly."

Along with support, improvement in coherency and clarity was apparent. The use of transitions between sentences and paragraphs greatly improved as the semester progressed. One student wrote:

I...learned how coherency can help keep a reader's attention, as the coherency in my Daytona classmate's paper kept mine... In seeing how another student used coherency in his paper, I was able to learn new ways to make my papers more coherent.

Students also discovered the importance of defining words and being clear when they received comments from their partners that revealed complete misreading of their essays. "It was obvious in the third paper on gender that I did not make my point too clear because the critic found the paper offensive to the female sex. I did not intend for this to happen," one student noted. Another commented, "Many times my Daytona correspondent would ask me what I meant when I said something in a sentence."

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As was remarked on in point three, often the students, in critiquing others' papers, used information they had gained during immediately preceding lessons, so that whatever was learned was reinforced and applied, if not always to their own papers, at least to someone else's. As one student remarked, to critique others, he had to reread his notes and text, and doing so was both rewarding and enjoyable in that he was immediately using what was learned in class. One student noted:

When I found a problem in N.'s paper, say, for instance, an ambiguous pronoun, I would be placing myself in a position to study the problem, catalogue the problem in my memory, and convey the problem to N. These steps reinforce the idea of an ambiguous pronoun in my mind, thus preventing me from making the same mistake.

This critical sense was transferred to both their papers and critiques. In other words, the "external dialogue," which Gyde Christine Martin discusses in "Protocol Analysis for the Student Writer"(47), and which took place in commenting on another's work, was internalized and applied to the students' own compositions. As one individual noted, when he would suggest that the other be more specific or create better transitions, he found himself being more specific and more coherent. Another student stated:

I critiqued the young woman's writing as lacking explanation of certain important ideas. While I marked up her composition, I remembered important explanations that I had left out in my previous paper. Because of this instance, I started explaining every important point in my following papers.

After writing a few critiques, one person wondered if his papers were as bad as the ones he was critiquing. He noted, "The thought of writing such a poor paper made me start proofreading extra carefully and from a different perspective."

When reading their partners' papers and critiques, the students often felt great frustration in not being able to follow someone's train of thought or organizational pattern. This frustration encouraged them to write clear theses and to then support and develop their papers according to the thesis.

Learning to write while keeping in mind the needs of their reader (the student partner) was mentioned by a number of students as a reason for improvement. Their awareness of audience and purpose most definitely changed. One student wrote:

When I was writing to Daytona, I would often let my mind wander and think about how my critic was going to respond to my paper. So, I would always try to make the paper as interesting as possible. This element

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allowed my papers to come to life because I was not just writing for a grade anymore. I was now writing to have someone listen. By writing to an actual person, my writing became important. Now that it was important, I tried harder to improve.

Some students used the phrase "walking in another's shoes" to describe how their critics' comments altered their perspective, in short, making them not only a writer but also a reader of their writing, an important role discussed by Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford in "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," in addition to other scholars such as Donald Murray (183).

To sharpen a sense of audience, instructors often have their students write to pretend audiences, yet the students know quite well who will be reading their papers. We figured that giving them a "live target," as one student noted, would be the best catalyst for enhancing the sense of audience. Why an English teacher does not qualify as a "live target" is discussed later in this paper.

What is also important to note is the fact that their critiques generally were better written than their papers. This result probably occurred because not only was their sense of audience sharpened but also their sense of purpose, in the case of the critiques, to help another.

Furthermore, many students came to realize the importance of allowing another person to critique their work and of the need to revise their writing. Many students noted that being given the

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opportunity to "see how another person visualizes" their work forced them to revise. Students made this point in a number of ways. One noted that he had to avoid "tunnel vision" because he was presenting his work "publicly" and had to "sharpen his thesis and support" because he was "communicating." Because of the critiques, another student realized that "improvement can always be made." He continued, "...with the help of my classmates, I have come to understand that I can not be perfect." A few students noticed that their partners often identified a problem in their writing that they knew existed but "hope[d] [they] would not notice." As Mary Louise Foster and Patricia Markey Naranjo point out in "Peer Evaluation: One Approach," ...such planning [of multiple rewrites] marks the beginning of their growth as writers, for one difference between beginners and experienced writers" is the latter's willingness to revise (129). A quotation from one student's final essay exemplifies the previous point.

In high school I never made more than two drafts of a paper. One was a rough draft and the other was a rough draft with spelling corrections that I turned in for my final paper. However, exchanging papers with another class and reading their critiques of my work motivated me to use their suggestions and try to improve my original work. The more that my critics wrote about my paper, the more I would do to revise it.

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The fourth and final point mentioned earlier was the objectivity of their student partners. They found someone "from the outside," with "less personal involvement," an effective critic. Two students commented that because the critics were distant, they believed the critics' input was "honest" and "straightforward," or when receiving a compliment, they knew that it was "for real." One individual wrote, "A compliment coming from a complete stranger, such as a Daytona student, always makes me feel good inside because they do not know who I am, just what I write." One remarked that "blood baths" were averted because he and his critic were half a continent apart.

As mentioned previously, during the first semester, I did use one composition section as a kind of control class, a class that exchanged papers and critiques among themselves instead of with Daytonians or another class on campus. In that class, no mention was made about writing becoming more fun nor about the objectivity of their critics. The value of a "distant" audience here becomes apparent. Writing to someone whom one will see at least twice a week instead of writing to a "penpal" creates a more awkward, strained environment, resembling that between a student and teacher in a traditional classroom. I also noticed that the camaraderie in that control class was somewhat less than in the classes that sent their work to penpals. In fact, the fellowship in the experimental classes sometimes was quite noticeable in their competitiveness with and shared complaints

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about the Daytonians' papers or about the students in the other class on the Prescott Campus.

Not all students found the experiment rewarding and problems did occur. The problems encountered can be grouped into two categories: transactional and logistical. In the transactional category are grouped the major problems the students had relating to and profiting from their relationship with a "penpal" partner. In the logistical category are gathered the chief difficulties involved in assembling, collecting and transferring all of the paperwork associated with a long distance group correspondence.

The major reason given by those who did not think their compositions improved or by those who related mixed responses was their partners' ineptitude either because of inexperience in editing or laziness. One student noted during the second semester that the critiques received were so poorly written, with evidence of little time or effort expended, that he was hesitant to consider the critic's advice. "For just as I hesitate to accept dietary advice from an obese dietician, how can I give any credit to an English critique that is so blatantly grammatically incorrect itself?" wrote another student during that semester.

Another common reason noted during the first semester for not benefiting from the experiment was their partner's interest in only proofreading for errors in mechanics or in debating content rather than giving constructive criticism.

A third frequently cited reason for not benefiting from the

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experiment during the fall semester was the partner's lack of tact when making criticisms and suggestions and the consequent defensiveness and unwillingness to follow the partner's suggestions. During that semester, one student wrote that "in my second paper, he completely 'blasted' everything I had to say, and therefore I didn't follow many of his suggestions." Another critic remarked about the student's nationality, German, being the reason for his dull papers. The German student naturally became defensive and did not pay attention to his partner's criticisms about his writing. Other comments written by my students' partners, such as "your paper introduced a new level of boredom" and "I almost cried when I read this part of your letter and my eyes were in pain," naturally only caused defensiveness. My students were equally tactless at times, as when they addressed their papers or critiques to "Dear Beachbum" or wrote statements referring to the Daytonians' lack of effort caused by excessive time spent on the beach or in the bars.

As the experiment continued, my colleagues and I did make some alterations. We encouraged more tact and discussed in class how to react to the suggestions by their partners. Models of critiques were distributed to students. Emphasis was put on encouraging the students to make more substantial, constructive criticism and do less proofreading and also on having them present rewriting options to their partners. We had the writers attach questions to their papers that would direct the partners

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to areas the writers thought needed work and constructive criticism. We also required a short summary of the thesis and major ideas in the critique to show the writer whether or not the reader understood the intent of the paper. Emphasis also was placed on discussing both the strengths and the weaknesses of the partner's paper, with the suggestion that the critics end their critiques with comments about the paper's strengths. (Doing so, I discovered, was difficult for them. Often the strengths were summed up in one line.)

The logistical difficulties mentioned earlier included the following: students occasionally failing to meet deadlines; the postal service sometimes failing to deliver the papers from Daytona on time; time for revision being pinched because of these delivery problems. Now that we have a university-wide computer network, these obstacles in part may be overcome. These problems, though annoying, were far outweighed by the positive results realized by this method.

As an instructor, I found this experiment a much needed change in my method of teaching composition. The burden of being the sole critic and motivator was shared. Many problems I noticed in reading the first drafts were corroborated by the student partners. One student who stubbornly resisted my suggestions did listen to the same suggestions when they were presented by a peer.

I also would like to note how the perception of the teacher as hyper-critic was brought to my attention as a result of this

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experiment. As Robert A. Schwegler points out in the Instructor's Annotated Edition of The Little Brown Handbook, students perceive English instructors as having an "unusual sensitivity to language" (AE-36). He goes on to state, "It is far too easy for students to dismiss an instructor's judgments because so many students believe that English instructors have a special set of standards not shared by the rest of the world" (AE-56). As one student wrote:

Until I participated in this 'experiment,' the only critics of my writing have been teachers. They gave me suggestions on how to improve my writing but these suggestions never seemed to sink in. I also never made a sincere effort to use their suggestions because I thought that the only reasons they could see flaws in my writing was because they were teachers. That is why I was shocked when an HU 123 student pointed out the same flaws to me.

And as another student commented:

...having my essays looked over by my C.F.S. (critical fellow student) helped me because it caused me to try harder to make my essays coherent and well developed. There is a certain feeling that a student gets when he thinks about someone else (besides his or her instructor) reading and analyzing his or her paper. Suddenly, when he realizes another normal person will

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be critiquing him, not just his paper, he wants to try hard so as to not make himself look like an idiot...he wants to be thought of as an intelligent person.

Finally, the students exhibited more of a concern or sense of responsibility for their writing than in previous classes. Two students mentioned that in writing to their distant correspondents, they wanted to "show off" or "push to write better...to relate..." (underlining my own).

Communicating for a purpose, whether to present information about themselves or to present information to help another in the form of a critique, resulted in more effective writing. The idea of writing for a reason and writing to a specific person or group mirrors the writing done in the world outside of academics. The fact that the critiques, structured and evaluated with the same criteria as the papers, often showed more improvement than the papers suggests that when individuals are given an audience to whom they feel connected and can envision and a meaningful purpose, in this case, helping another, then the motivation to write well is enhanced. Writing for a grade motivates only superficially. Writing only to an instructor who is perceived as a semi-human being with heightened critical abilities is not enough. In Critical Thinking and Reading: Empowering Learners to Think and Act, Allan R. Neilson remarks that to encourage critical thought, students must be given "projects that are of personal interest and consequence" (1). This experiment is an

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attempt at such a project, and I plan to continue it not only in this freshman course but also in other courses.

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Letter/Critique

The goal of the letter/critique is to help your distant classmate improve his/her writing. To do so, in your letters, you may respond to some of the following questions. Do not feel that you have to respond to all of the questions. Do remember to be specific. (The classmate cannot ask you for clarification.) Do compose a thesis that allows your distant classmate to know what to expect in the body of the letter that he/she is receiving. Do read the paper thoroughly before making any comments. Be tactful, helpful. Typing or word-processing is preferred.

1. Is the purpose of the assignment achieved? Does the essay entertain or inform or persuade effectively? How so?
2. What do you like best in the essay?
3. What do you like least?
4. Is the thesis clear and is the thesis followed in the body of the essay?
5. Is the support (or evidence offered) effective? Do you feel satisfied or do you feel as if the essay "teases" and does not provide enough support or does not "show" enough (as opposed to tell enough)? Explain.
6. Are the sentences and paragraphs connected like links in a chain (connected coherently) or is the essay more like a rambling, stumbling, incoherent drunk? Explain.
7. Are the words (nouns and verbs) specific and is the sentence construction varied or are the words bland like mashed potatoes and the sentence construction hypnotic or jerky? Explain.
8. Do you understand most of the sentences or passages, or are there some that confuse you or cause rereading? If the latter, explain to your distant classmate how you interpret those passages.
9. Are the essay's mechanics and grammar adequate or are there errors that distract or disturb or stop your reading? Do not correct the errors. Instead, point them out to your distant classmate.
10. Does the essay keep your attention or does the essay induce a semi-catatonic state? How so?

Each letter/critique probably will be at least two typed or word-processed pages.

Revised instructions (fall '91)

WRITING A LETTER/CRITIQUE: GUIDELINES

The goal of the letter/critique is to help your fellow student improve his/her writing and critical thinking. To do so, your letter/critique needs to focus on three areas:

1. Structure (how the whole is organized)
2. Content (what is expressed--the message)
3. Style (how the content is articulated)

As you write the letter/critique, be sure you do the following as you comment on the above areas of structure, content, and style:

- * Be sure your letter/critique has a thesis that allows your fellow student to know what to expect in the body of the letter/critique.
- * Remember to be specific and clear in explaining your observations: your fellow student cannot ask you for clarification. Support your points. For example, instead of merely stating that the paper is incoherent, show your fellow student "how" the paper is incoherent. Give examples or, in other words, give support for your points.
- * Do not simply identify problems but also suggest possible solutions.
- * Identify and explain not only what is troublesome but also what is GOOD about the paper in the areas of structure, content, and style.
- ** Most important, explain what you learned from the paper. Discuss the insights or perceptions that were either gained or effectively corroborated from reading the paper, that is, discuss your reactions to the ideas. BEFORE DOING THE ABOVE, PARAPHRASE WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS THE THESIS OF THE PAPER (its purpose and main ideas).
- * Be sure to read the paper thoroughly before making any comments. Be tactful, helpful. Avoid an attitude that says "this paper sucks." Respond to any questions that your fellow student may attach to his/her first draft.
- * See "model" critique, but remember that the critique was written for an exchange between 122 classes on the two campuses and thus may be slightly different from your critique.
- * Each letter/critique should be at least two word processed pages. Use the following form.

HU 122 or HU 123
(equivalent to box
or street #)
ERAU
Prescott, Arizona
86301

September 3, 1991

SS #123-34-5643
ERAU
Prescott, Arizona
86301

Sincerely,

SS #145-65-3456

What follows are questions that address the three areas mentioned previously. Do not feel that you have to respond to all of the questions, only the ones you deem relevant.

Structure

1. Does the paper have an introduction (attention-grabber coming before the thesis), body, and conclusion? If no conclusion, does the paper end on a note of finality: the lid of the box snapping shut?
2. Does the paper have a thesis that establishes a stance (purpose, angle) and summarizes the main points in the order they are developed in the body? The thesis will come after the attention-grabber (introduction) and usually will be at the end of the first paragraph in a paper less than approximately six pages. The thesis may be more than one sentence.
3. Do the body paragraphs have topic sentences that relate clearly to the points of the thesis?

Content

4. Is the purpose of the assignment achieved? Why or why not?
5. Does the paper merely rehash ideas everybody already knows or does it attempt to explore some original insights about the topic being addressed? In other words, does the paper contain ideas that interest you and keep your attention or does the paper induce a semi-catatonic state?
6. Are the ideas in each paragraph fully and logically developed? Do you feel satisfied with what is written, or do you feel as if the paragraphs "tease" and do not provide enough support or do not "show" enough (as opposed to tell enough)?

Style

7. Are smooth transitions employed between paragraphs and sentences within the paragraphs? In other words, are the paragraphs and sentences connected like links in a chain (connected coherently) or is the essay more like a rambling, stumbling, incoherent drunk?
8. Do all the sentences and paragraphs make sense to you or are some of them unclear and confusing? If the latter, identify the unclear passages and explain how you interpret them.
9. Is the choice of words (especially nouns and verbs) effective and concrete? Is the sentence structure varied? Do the sentences show relationships between ideas by using subordination and coordination? Or are the words bland like spaghetti without sauce or salad without salad dressing and the sentence structure like a Chinese water drip torture or like a first grade reader?
10. Are the paper's mechanics and grammar adequate or are there errors that are distracting and force you to stop reading? DO NOT CORRECT THESE ERRORS. Instead, tell the student that he/she has problems in the area of spelling or punctuation, for example. Give the student only a few illustrations of his/her errors.

The areas on the evaluation sheet may help you further in critiquing your fellow student's work.

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Dept. of Humanities
ERAU
Prescott, AZ

November 19, 1996

Dept. of Humanities
ERAU
Daytona Beach, FL

Dear Lee:

The topic you have written on is very interesting and the points in your paper are insightful and convincing. As well written as your paper is though, I do have some suggestions that may help in improving it. The criticisms I have for you focus on the paper's organization, coherency, and diction with some general suggestions also included.

Looking over the paper's opening paragraph, I didn't see the supporting points to the thesis included in the paper's introduction. In addition to making an assertion in the thesis, introduce the points you have that support the thesis and that will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow. For example, your paper includes paragraphs that describe women's reluctance to venture into male dominated career fields and also of their fear of sexual harassment. Both of these observations are given as reasons for male domination in the aviation industry. To establish a more complete introduction to the paper, include these points in the thesis statement. The reader will then know what each of the following paragraphs will be about and will have an easier time following the rest of the paper. Each point given in the thesis should then be addressed in their respective paragraphs to create a solid continuum of support throughout the

body. Your thesis statement should then accurately reflect the content of the paper. Doing this should remedy the inconsistencies found between your thesis statement and supporting material.

In your thesis you suggest that the industry needs to make aviation more appealing to women if we are to see more of them at ERAU, yet you end your paper by concluding that women must overcome their own fears and apprehensions before change may come about. The latter assertion appears to be the one that is focused on in the paper. Since you have not given any support to your belief that the industry needs to make aviation appealing to women, I suggest that you change the thesis so that it is consistent with the paper's content and conclusion. Another element critical to a paper's coherency is the transition sentence.

Transitions help in creating a smooth, logical flow between each supporting paragraph. Although your use of topic sentences was effective, you haven't included any transition sentences in your paper. Because they act as a good crutch, to easily confused readers, like myself, I recommend that you tie your points together with them. The coherency of the paper could also be improved through rewording and regrouping certain sentences.

I was able to understand what you are saying in the first sentence of the opening paragraph but some readers may not because of the way it has been worded and punctuated. Simply moving the word "are" to the front of the sentence and adding

quotation marks to the words you are referring to will make the sentence understandable and technically correct. The same problem exists in the very next sentence, this time because it lacks a verb. The substitution of a phrase like "this seems to be the case" for the chosen word "apparently" will repair the sentence and ensure its coherency. The second sentence of the third paragraph is also illogical. Since a woman obviously cannot be a "cooking meal" or a "bearing child," this sentence should be reworded so that your point is more accurately illustrated. "Meal cookers" and "child bearers" may be the terms you are looking for.

On a similar note, the third sentence of the first paragraph seems out of place. It doesn't introduce the thesis statement, nor does it act as the thesis or serve as a point of support. This sentence should probably be placed in the third paragraph, where that particular point is being addressed. Just as writing logical and grammatically correct sentences is important to the coherency of a paper, so is the choice of words you use to create each sentence.

For the most part, the diction you have used is fine. I found only a couple of words that you may want to change just for the sake of clarity. As you introduce Reskin and Hartman's quotation in the third paragraph, you use the word "said." Words like "states," "suggests," or "asserts" are far more descriptive as introductory words. Also, avoid wishy-washy words like "apparently," "perhaps," and "maybe," particularly when you are

writing to make a point. Words like these lack assertiveness and take away from a paper's credibility.

On a more general level, you may try grounding your perceptions with specific support. Backing your points with actual examples will give your opinions and assertions more substance. Also, in regard to integrating specific support, when introducing a quotation into a paper, don't let the quote speak for you. In the fourth paragraph you introduce a quotation to aid you in making a point, but you don't explain how the quote supports what you are saying. The reader might not make the connection between the quotation and your point so be sure to provide the necessary explanation.

Although it may seem as though I've found many things to criticize, I did find the paper interesting and your points well made. The vocabulary you have used is excellent and makes the paper very easy to read. I hope you can use some of my suggestions to make this paper even better.

Sincerely,

Adam Bobertski

REPRESENTATIVE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE EXPERIMENT

1. "I saw that all [students] had the same problems."
2. Teachers mostly look at the mechanical things, like punctuation and spelling and so forth, but students look at and decide if they like it or not. If they like the story or subject, they tell you and then pick a few mechanical faults.... Also students aren't as critical [as teachers]. They don't have a specific standard they have to meet when critiquing. They use their own judgment more than a list of criteria.
3. "I welcomed the change from writing to a fictitious audience or an English instructor who stood poised to rip my paper apart."
4. "Because this critique comes from a fellow student, I don't take all of the comments personally as I would have had a professor made the comments."
5. "It (the critique) was more like having a friend tell me what was wrong with my paper."
6. "Indeed, it is the student's utter lack of knowledge [technical] that prevents him or her from finding anything but serious glitches."
7. "I knew more about writing than I thought I did."
8. "In the third and last critique, I realized I was no longer a bad English student."
9. Obviously something is going on rather important, because it is obvious that this paper took no time at all to write. You had some good ideas for what education meant at Embry-Riddle; if you would just elaborate on these ideas, then this paper can go nowhere but uphill.
10. When I found a problem in N.'s paper, say, for instance, an ambiguous problem, I would be placing myself in a position to study the problem, catalogue the problem in my memory, and convey the problem to N. These steps reinforce the idea of an ambiguous pronoun in my mind, thus preventing me from making the same mistake.

11. My Daytona 'corrections advisor' tried to be gentle in explaining he was confused about my stance [thesis] and the order I would be taking to explain my topic. I had told (him) the same item in his paper was very good and so I looked at his paper and determined he had a kind of outline. I used this on my final draft and felt that it came out much better.
12. One paper I read from Daytona had many points in the body of the paper that were not mentioned in the thesis. This caused a great lack of support for the thesis statement. After I had written the critique, I noticed several points in my paper were not mentioned in the thesis. I was able to recognize and correct this in the same manner.
13. Not fully developing a paragraph has always been a bad habit of mine, one that I have not noticed till writing to Daytona. Using Daytona's advice, I have stopped and examined all my paragraphs and have asked myself, "What examples or points can I add to develop this more thoroughly
14. Advising the other student on how they could improve their paper helped me also. When I would write back to them telling them to be more specific, I would write my paper with more detail.
15. "It was obvious in the third paper on gender that I did not make my point too clear because the critic found the paper offensive to the female sex. I did not intend for this to happen."
16. "Many times my Daytona correspondent would ask me what I meant when I said something in a sentence."
17. Your word choice could have been a little more varied. There were times when I was reading your paper that I had this feeling of deja vu. Too many of your sentences were too much alike. As an example, I saw the word "because" so much that I was beginning to believe that there was no other way of expressing a relationship between two things.
18. I ... learned how coherency can help keep a reader's attention, as the coherency in my Daytona classmate's paper kept mine.... In seeing how another student used coherency in his paper, I was able to learn

new ways to make my papers more coherent.

19. "The thought of writing such a poor paper made me start proofreading extra carefully and from a different perspective."

20. I critiqued the young woman's writing as lacking explanation of certain important ideas. While I marked up her composition, I remembered important explanations that I had left out in my previous paper. Because of this instance, I started explaining every important point in my following papers.

21. When I was writing to Daytona, I would often let my mind wander and think about how my critic was going to respond to my paper. So, I would always try to make the paper as interesting as possible. This element allowed my papers to come to life because I was not just writing for a grade anymore. I was now writing to have someone listen. By writing to an actual person, my writing became important. Now that it was important, I tried harder to improve.

22. ...having my essays looked over by my C.F.S. [critical fellow student] helped me because it caused me to try harder to make my essays coherent and well developed. There is a certain feeling that a student gets when he thinks about someone else (besides his or her instructor) reading and analyzing his or her paper. Suddenly, when he realizes another normal person will be critiquing him, not just his paper, he wants to try hard so as to not make himself look like an idiot....
...he wants to be thought of as an intelligent person.

23. "A compliment coming from a complete stranger, such as a Daytona student, always makes me feel good inside because they do not know who I am, just what I write."

24. "For just as I hesitate to accept dietary advice from an obese dietician, how can I give any credit to an English critique that is so blatantly grammatically incorrect itself?"

25. I will have to admit that the first critique I received had me upset. I felt I had sent a paper that was superbly written. I couldn't believe he actually found two pages worth of mistakes to write about. Once I was able to move beyond my fury and read his critique objectively, I concluded that he had some valid points.